

State of Illinois  
Rod R. Blagojevich, Governor

Illinois Environmental Protection Agency  
Doug Scott, Director

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UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS  
AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN



## Former Newman School Douglas County, Illinois

October 2006

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### Introduction

Based on the human health threat from exposure posed by the dilapidated, asbestos-containing school located at 708 North Broadway in Newman, the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (Illinois EPA) will abate the asbestos where safe to do so and remove the building using State funds. Due to the condition of this former school, it is highly likely that asbestos fibers are being released to the environment and coming in contact with trespassers. Health concerns for human exposure warrants corrective action at this location.

### Site History and Background

This once functional and prospering community school has become not only an eyesore, but also a threat to the community it once served. The main building was constructed in 1912. Later a gymnasium addition was constructed to the south of the original building. The school closed in 1994 after consolidation of surrounding communities. Since then, various private owners have further neglected to perform any repairs or secure the building.

The imminent threat from the former Newman School is the potential for asbestos exposure and the physical hazards to trespassers and nearby residents. Currently collapsed floors, roofs and walls make it impossible to secure or abate this building; therefore removal is the only option for eliminating the threat.



### The Threat From Asbestos

Asbestos is a group of naturally occurring minerals that contain indestructible fibers that can occur in several forms. Because of its remarkable fire resistant properties and excellent insulating capabilities, it has been used in thousands of common building materials.

Any level of exposure to asbestos involves some health risk, although the exact degree of risk is difficult to estimate. The relationship between exposure level and health risk is complex. When the fibers enter the air, individuals may be exposed and inhale the fibers. Those fibers retained by the lungs will remain

indefinitely. Exposure to high levels of airborne asbestos is associated with a debilitating lung disease called asbestosis; a rare cancer of the chest and abdominal lining called mesothelioma; and cancers of the lung, esophagus, stomach, colon, and other organs.

Children and young adults who are exposed to asbestos have a greater chance than older adults of developing certain asbestos-related diseases due to a longer remaining lifespan during which disease may develop. Children and young adults are most often those involved in the trespassing and vandalism at the former school, and therefore are at greater risk for exposure.



## Corrective Action: Using State Funds

- ❖ The Illinois EPA has confirmed the presence of various asbestos-containing materials within the building through laboratory analysis.
- ❖ The corrective actions to be completed by State contractor, The SI Group and their subcontractor Steve's Trucking, Inc. include:
  - 1) abatement of asbestos containing material where safe;
  - 2) wet demolition which requires wetting of the building material throughout the demolition activity;
  - 3) sealing of asbestos-containing materials in leak tight containers; and
  - 4) air monitoring (which counts fibers suspended in the air) during the removal.
- ❖ All asbestos material will be disposed of at an asbestos permitted landfill. At the landfill, the material is buried and covered immediately with six inches of compacted soil to prevent further disruption of the material.
- ❖ All work will be done in accordance to the National Emission Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants, a Federal regulation under the Clean Air Act, Occupational Safety and Health Association Standards, Illinois EPA regulations and applicable Illinois Department of Public Health Regulations for Commercial and Public Buildings.
- ❖ The cost to abate and dispose of the building remains is estimated at \$521,000.
- ❖ It is anticipated that work will begin November 2006 and be completed within approximately two months.

The City of Newman is the current owner of the property. The work to be done by Illinois EPA will enable the community to benefit in the following ways:

- ❖ a physical and environmental threat is removed from the community;
- ❖ property values can increase; and
- ❖ the property can be utilized by the community for the residents of Newman.



### For More Information

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